

CAPITAL CORNER:

K's May Day Blast Part of Red Game

STATINTL

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WASHINGTON: Steady nerves, everybody; N. S. Khrushchev isn't about to plunge us into another Cuban crisis. The old rascal needed a hunk of revolutionary rhetoric to juice-up his May Day rituals and Cuba was a convenient tool around which to wrap the ancient fire-breathing phrases of Bolshevik defiance.



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N. S. Khrushchev is never going to be coaxed into a major war in an area thousands of miles from the nearest Soviet base, for reasons not pertinent to vital Russian interests, and in behalf of a nutty Latino of dubious stability. When Chairman Khrushchev buys himself a big war—and it's our conviction he never will, knowing the awesome oomph of nuclear weaponry—he'll make his purchase closer to home, on terms more suitable to Soviet

strategy. He can have a showdown in Berlin, the perennial bone in his throat, at any minute and he hasn't gone shopping around there in quite some time.

Still, the mention of Cuba and the familiar threats about bases, missiles, overflights, and the other currency of diplomatic exchange rightly caused a few qualms here and there. The last time the boys got throwing uncompromising pledges around, promises they had to ultimately fulfill, was in late July and August 1914, and we all know what happened after that. Khrushchev isn't the Kaiser, however, and we doubt if he'll ever become the prisoner of his own pledges.

Our memory skipped right over the Cuban confrontation of 1962 and ended up in a remembrance of another May just four years ago, the year of our last presidential election. The Republicans thought they had a nice shiny "peace" issue going for them as May began, and it was fragmented to smithereens four or five days later. We went to Paris two weeks afterwards for the official burial, conducted by N. S. Khrushchev, without much help from pall-bearers named Eisenhower, Macmillan, and DeGaulle.

THAT WAS THE SUMMIT THAT WASN'T. You may remember this reporter was in West Virginia covering the Democratic primary—Jack Kennedy won—when the unbelievable sequence touched off by the shooting down of Gary Powers' U-2 began to unravel.

If memory serves, we were in the Charleston Press Club—a classy place which ranks with the San Francisco Press Club as tops of its type—having dinner with Bobby Kennedy, then just a young strategist hustling votes for an older brother. The word came that Washington had recanted its own version of the Powers overflight; and nobody could believe it.

In retrospect, it seems clear that the Eisenhower administration should have stuck to a "cover" story and blandly denied any ill-doing.

The British have just given us another lesson in how these things are handled. Somehow the British penetrated the highest ranks of the Soviet secret police, an almost incredible achievement. A British businessman named Greville Wynne became the patsy, the Soviet plant, Pankovich, was executed, and the Communists ran one of their thorough purges of the tainted agency.

Last week Mr. Wynne returned to his London home in a spy exchange and the British predictably played it down. The Establishment newspapers published the predictable stories—he was small fry, not "one of the boys," the Russians got the best of it, etc. But the stiff upper-lip treatment carried the British around another parlous espionage corner.

Similar savvy might have taken the Eisenhower administration off the hook in May, 1960. Anyway, the "peace" issue went sky-high before the election never to descend to earth. We hope President Johnson will be mighty careful that history doesn't repeat.

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